



April 29, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

This is a letter of support for the Village Exchange Center (VEC). We are glad to support the community efforts and the community kitchen of the VEC.

VEC is already feeding many people with the food pantry. This would be a vital contribution to the community allowing us to come together as one. Also, it allows us to share different cultural cuisines and bring together different cultures. It will also allow access to the community kitchen and other resources at the center.

Pastors Kevin and Lynn Rawlins
Pastors Kevin and Lynn Rawlins

Blow the Trumpet Ministries

VILLAGE EXCHANGE CENTER	TEL_ (720) 668 9968	1609 Havana St. Aurora, CO 80010	United States of America
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April 30th, 2021

TO: Whom it may concern

FROM: Roxy Hernandez

The Village Exchange Center, a nonprofit community and multi-faith worship space that serves low-income refugees and immigrants, seeks capital support to strengthen its infrastructure and grow its space, something that is crucial to the empowerment of the North West Aurora low income community.

In order to give this letter of support meaning in my own personal case not only as a community leader but also as a small business owner, I formally attempted a food business for the last 7 or so years, it was a struggle to meet guidelines established by the local health department, given the fact that NW Aurora does not have an affordable and convenient commissary kitchen. There is only 2 near the community and there is a long waiting list to access membership that in most cases is not convenient because there is limited hours that the food entrepreneurs can use.

I started my journey in another community away from Aurora and once I was ready to embark on my own, I ran into the problem that I could not find a commissary kitchen to cook and prepare from. I went to the extent to approach churches, small restaurants and soup kitchens to advocate for my friends and my own needs for this commissary kitchen so that we could make a living locally, that way we could affect the food security inequities in NW Aurora and also improve our families physical and financial health.

I knew there was hope when leadership from the Village Exchange Center shared that the kitchen at the center would be updated and possibly become a commercial kitchen open to the community. That was long ago and most of the immigrant entrepreneurs from the original group have had to find other ways to make a living because not having this necessary structure in our community has hindered us from achieving our objective, even more so now with the pandemic. The capital improvements sought by the Village Exchange Center shines a light on prosperity, better economic opportunities and well being.

I am happy to support this meaningful idea that would mean the Center can positively impact the community by offering culinary courses, impact workforce education, possibly become an incubator for heritage foods and positively impact the immigrant and refugee communities it serves.

Please feel free to contact me if you need clarification or have questions in this regard,



Roxy Hernandez

Antojitos Dcuscatlan, LLC

antojitosdcuscatlan@gmail.com

(720)276-1072

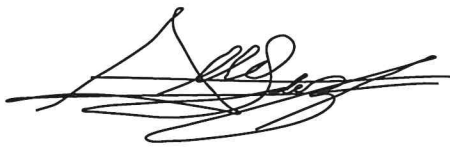
April 29,2021

To Whom It May Concern,

This is a letter of support for the Village Exchange Center (VEC). We are very happy to support the community through VEC as Natural Helpers.

VEC has done an amazing job in training and equipping us with the knowledge and resources so we may be better able to provide these resources to community members from all different countries that are in need to better stabilize themselves and families with this information.

We provide resources for employment, medical, legal, food and much more.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aide Salazar Zetin', with several horizontal lines drawn through it.

Aide Salazar Zetin

Natural Helper Cohort of 2020

April 29, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

This is a letter of support for the Village Exchange Center (VEC). We are glad to support the community efforts and the community kitchen of the VEC.

VEC is already feeding many people with the food pantry. This would be a vital contribution to the community allowing us to come together as one. Also, it allows us to share different cultural cuisines and bring together different cultures. It will also allow access to the community kitchen and other resources at the center.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Pastors Kevin and Lynn Rawlins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The word "Pastors" is written in a smaller, more compact script, while "Kevin" and "Lynn" are larger and more prominent. "Rawlins" is written in a similar cursive style, completing the full name.

Blow the Trumpet Ministries

April 29,2021

To Whom It May Concern,

This is a letter of support for the Village Exchange Center (VEC). I am very proud to support the community through VEC as a Natural Helpers.

VEC has done a SUPERB job in training and equipping us with the knowledge and resources so we may be better able to provide these resources to community members from all different countries, that are in need to better stabilize themselves and families with this information.

We volunteer our time in different community outreach events that VEC does to better inform our people about the resources and tools they need to succeed. I am proud to be called a Natural Helper for VEC. Not only has VEC helped equip me but also my family, that is why I enjoy being able to help others as well.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Judith Padilla".

Judith Padilla

Natural Helper Cohort of 2019



To whom it may concern,

It is a joy to share our support for this funding request from the Village Exchange Center, a nonprofit that has been working in Northwest Aurora to support the one in five Aurorans who are immigrants or refugees.

VEC and its Executive Director, Amanda Blaurock, have been important partners of Adams County throughout the pandemic. On behalf of VEC, Ms. Blaurock was a member of two of Adams County's COVID 19 Response and Recovery teams and was an avid participant in both groups as we navigated uncharted waters through the pandemic. Adams County also directly supported VEC's payment and screening work on the Left Behind Workers Fund through funding of \$1.3MM to provide \$1000 grants to workers that lost their job due to the pandemic but were ineligible for federal or unemployment insurance. Most recently, Adams County approached VEC to start a fund for an even larger demographic of individuals that are low wage workers that get COVID but couldn't afford to quarantine. We provided VEC with a \$275,000 grant to pilot the program.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development's Economic Development Initiative (EDI) seems to be designed with VEC in mind. Housed in a former church building, VEC serves thousands of low-income community members. The space that is about 50 years old, and VEC has made significant improvements to the HVAC system, building security, and more; still, the level of investment needed is well beyond the means of a nonprofit that is focused on delivering programs and services. The large building needs major updates including structural supports in the basement and a commercial kitchen to meet the needs for VEC's culinary and entrepreneurship workforce development for adults.

An EDI grant will be a real investment in VEC, Adams County and the Northwest Aurora neighborhood where it resides. Strengthening VEC's physical infrastructure will in turn strengthen the immigrant and refugee communities that VEC serves through direct services and programming, allowing for expanded services and programming.

Adams County strongly supports this proposal for capital funding for VEC's building at 1609 Havana St., in Aurora. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,



Commissioner Eva J.
Henry, District 1



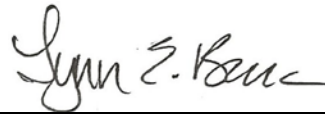
Commissioner Charles
"Chaz" Tedesco, District 2



Commissioner Emma Pinter,
District 3



Commissioner Steve O'Dorisio,
District 4



Commissioner Lynn Baca,
District 5



Mayor
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April 12, 2021

To the Appropriations Committee:

The Village Exchange Center, a nonprofit and multifaith worship space located in Northwest Aurora, is applying for capital support from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Economic Development Initiative. The City of Aurora wholeheartedly supports this endeavor, which promises to improve VEC's role in the community and offer a broader range of programs and services upon the completion of this capital project.

Since VEC's inception four years ago, the City of Aurora has partnered with VEC in many capacities, especially through our Office of International and Immigrant Affairs. In its short life, VEC has proved to be a capable and fiscally responsible partner, helping to fill the gap between what local government and the need in our community. In 2020, for example, VEC acted as the payment partner for the Left Behind Workers Fund, screening individuals and helping to distribute approximately \$11 million in direct assistance to those who had been left out of federal and assistance programs like the CARES Act and state unemployment. VEC took a bold stance and ensured that the most marginalized in our city were not left behind.

VEC fills a unique niche in the nonprofit landscape here, serving some of those who are hardest to reach: low-income immigrants and refugees. VEC continues to deepen its roots within these diverse communities, and the present capital request will build out their existing space to accommodate more programs to serve these populations. A commercial kitchen, for example, will lend itself to culinary, nutrition, and entrepreneurship workshops for adults and youth. All of the capital improvements sought will long outlive the life of this funding, serving as a true investment in our communities' economic wellbeing.

Sincerely,

Mike Coffman
Mayor



April 13, 2021

Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Members of the Committee on Appropriations:

What a pleasure it is to support the Village Exchange Center as it continues to grow its roots in Aurora! I'm happy to endorse this proposal for a capital investment from HUD's Economic Development Initiative.

As the owner/founder of Stanley Marketplace in Aurora, I can speak first-hand to the importance of investment in our urban spaces, in a way that gives them new life and makes them relevant again. I was part of a group of investors who took an empty warehouse space that was for years an eyesore and turned it into a vibrant destination in Northwest Aurora. This industrial space, which sat empty for many years, is now a place where thousands come every day to converse, eat, exercise, and connect with their communities. Over 50 small businesses call Stanley their home, building Aurora's tax base and supporting local entrepreneurs and employment.

As a social worker first and a developer second, I was thrilled to learn about the Village Exchange Center, just a mile from the Stanley. In fact, I found VEC's mission so compelling, I rolled up my sleeves and helped a team of architects and contractors to take what I'd learned over my years of transforming the Stanley, to consult on the capital project under consideration. I even met with City of Aurora representatives to facilitate the challenging processes involved in any project of this magnitude. A storefront, restaurant and community kitchen here represent a truly meaningful and dynamic social enterprise.

I am not merely a cheerleader on the sidelines. I've championed VEC at the Stanley as well. We entered into a formal agreement for VEC to assume a 20-year lease on a parcel of land behind the Stanley, and I supported this effort not only with the land donation but with the site plan submission. In 2020, I watched as VEC transformed the dry soil into a vibrant, lush urban farm that feeds our low-income neighbors. I mobilized our Stanley Beer Hall kitchens, too, to feed those working on the farm, and again through prepared meals for VEC's food pantry.

After working closely with VEC in multiple capacities, I sincerely believe in how VEC is putting its vision into practice. I trust that the planned expansion and upgrades to their space will make their work in the community even more powerful.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Mark Shaker", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Mark Shaker
Principal



Jena Griswold
Colorado Secretary of State

I strongly support the proposal from the Village Exchange Center (VEC), which plans to expand its footprint and improve its infrastructure to better serve Aurora's newcomers and low-income community members. HUD's Economic Development Initiative makes great economic and social sense in this Northwest Aurora neighborhood.

Aurora in particular has been experiencing rapid growth, and investing in this high priority neighborhood can help promote employment, workforce development, and greater access to resources. VEC's capital expenditures can help VEC continue to grow its programs and services for low-income, immigrant and refugee individuals. The State of Colorado's 2020 New American Integration Report highlights the economic impact of immigrants and refugees and places a premium on programs like VEC's, which promotes opportunities that facilitate both economic stability and integration.

VEC's proposed capital investments will allow for more extensive and more robust training for future entrepreneurs, ensuring that they understand tax and licensing requirements, receive marketing and branding education, engage in networking with local resources, and receive the certifications and other training most essential to small business development and success. Acting as a business incubator, VEC plans to promote economic development and support the next generation of entrepreneurs.

VEC is an outstanding candidate for these funds, and is an organization that prides itself on fiscal responsibility. This proposal has my support.

Best,

Jena Griswold
Colorado Secretary of State